Statement of Work

I.   Introduction

A.   Background/Need

The Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPH) is the only national organization representing the deans, faculty, and students of this nation's 36 accredited Schools of Public Health (SPH), and the graduate programs in public health seeking accredited school status in North America. These schools have a combined faculty of over 3,000 and educate more than 15,000 students annual from every state in the U.S. and most countries throughout the world. The schools graduate approximately 5,000 professionals each year.

Increasingly, as one component of an effort to strengthen and direct the "pipeline" leading to a well-trained public health workforce, active partnerships are being formed between SPH, and state and local public health entities. SPH also serve as an educational resource to the public health community, and since public health content is constantly evolving, lifelong education is crucial to those working in public health. Education in the form of distance learning (DL) is particularly valuable to these professionals, because they are geographically widespread and in need of flexible learning systems that can be scheduled around other professional commitments. Finally, as numerous studies have documented, much of the public health workforce lacks formal training, and an even greater number lack graduate public health degrees, making Master of Public Health (MPH) and certificate programs available at a distance especially important.

With the influx and improvement of distance learning techniques and technologies, more and more SPH have been making education and training programs available to learners at a distance. Currently, one third of the accredited schools of public health offer a Master of Public Health program that can be earned either partially or completely at a distance, and many more offer certificate programs in various content areas. Again, this education is especially important to those in the public health workforce seeking continuing professional education, in particular degrees or certificates.

Over time, as distance learning has become more prevalent at the SPH, ASPH has developed and supported several modes of working with the schools in the area of distance learning to support and advance the mission of providing quality DL in the SPH.

These include:

- Establishment of Academic Distance Learning Coordinators (ADLC), comprised of one representative at each school who focuses on DL and its issues,
- Support of the ASPH Distance Education (DE) and Continuing Professional Education (CPE) Councils, who meet annually to discuss issues of DL in public health, and whose core members are Academic Distance Learning Coordinators,

- Design and development of a section devoted to DL programs at SPH on the ASPH website.

Originally created in 2000, with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the primary purpose of the ASPH DL web pages was to provide a comprehensive listing of SPH-developed DL training programs to public health workers interested in obtaining an MPH or certificate, or participating in specific courses, available from SPH via distance learning.

The DL section of the ASPH site currently features general information on DL and a page for each SPH to describe its DL programs. The information on the DL pages is searchable at a broad level, using the global ASPH search engine. Two downloadable documents containing an outline and a brief overview of MPH programs available at a distance are also accessible on the site. This information on DL programs has proven to be consistently popular among ASPH constituents, especially professionals seeking further education.

The DL section of the website was designed to enable each school to maintain their own information. Each Academic Distance Learning Coordinators (ADLC) has access to a back-end administrative site with which to manage and update information. However, evidence has shown that this approach has had mixed success. Staffing changes within schools in the Academic DLC position and a steady increase in the number of ASPH members has resulted in a section that is not always current. Because this information is in such demand, it is especially important that its validity can be trusted.

Although analysis of the website has shown that the DL section is frequently visited, feedback from visitors has indicated that the web pages can be frustrating to use. In particular, the current search engine does not allow for searches on variables of interest such as DL format, or content area, except at a very broad level. A dedicated search feature focused specifically on DL programs would greatly improve the site's usability.

More information regarding the ASPH DL site was gathered during the November 7th 2004 meeting of the ASPH Distance Education Council, composed of representatives from the SPH particularly informed on DL--primarily Academic Distance Learning Coordinators. During this meeting feedback was gathered on: the importance of the site to SPH, obstacles to regular posting of information on the site by SPH, and the role of the SPH in maintaining the site's data, among other issues. Input was as follows:

- SPH see their DL programs as crucial tools for "increasing access to students who might not otherwise be served."

- Because of this, SPH definitely want ASPH to continue supporting and hosting the DL site, and emphasized the need to keep it current.

❖ SPH representatives wanted to continue being involved in the process of updating the information on the site, and are anxious to begin such updates, but agreed that ASPH should have a guiding hand in ensuring regular updates.

❖ An improved search engine on the DL site, devoted to the searching of DL programs, is a definite priority.

❖ ADLC see the posting of individual courses on the ASPH site as problematic because of frequent fluctuation, instead, SPH supported developing a mechanism on the site indicating which programs do or do not have individual DL courses available for non-degree seeking students. Site users could then be directed to the SPH for detailed information on what is available, scheduling, fees, registration, etc.

B.   Purpose and Objective

The overall goals of this project are to update the information provided on the DL section of the ASPH website and to improve the functionality of the site. This will provide one place where any member of the public health workforce may go to find information about classes/training necessary to help them in their job. This will be accomplished by the following five objectives:

- Work with the Academic DLCs to update the information on the website
- Evaluate the current data elements collected about DL programs, as well as representation of all current accredited and associate SPH, a total of 42 schools, and revise as needed.
- Create a system to ensure that information on the website is kept current
- Develop an improved search engine to allow users to more easily use the website.
- Market the website to web areas frequently accessed by public health workers.

II.   Vendor requirements

A.   General Requirements

1. Independently, and not as an agent of the Government, the contractor shall furnish all necessary labor, materials, supplies, equipment, and services needed to complete this project according to the proposed statement of work.

2. All work performed under the procurement shall be monitored by the Project Officer.

B.   Specific Requirements

1. Overview

a. Vendor must have knowledge of the accredited schools of public health and established lines of communication with the Academic Distance Learning Coordinators for each school.

b. Vendor must have knowledge of lines of communication with web areas frequently accessed by public health workers.

2. Personnel

a. Vendor must be able to work with Academic Distance Learning Coordinators and Continuing Professional Education Councils.

b. Vendor staff must possess Master of Public Health (MPH) or Master of Public Health/Certified Health Education Specialist (MPH/CHES) degrees/certification and Masters of Education (MEd) degree.

3. Reports

a. Vendor shall submit to the project officer the following reports:

1. Plan for analysis
2. Report detailing the new data elements on the Distance Learning website
3. Launch of new search engine on Distance Learning website.
4. Final Report

b. The proposal shall have proposed completion dates for each of these reports.